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ABSTRACT

Developed for college graduates with disabilities, this guide offers guidance for the job search process in the context of job applicants' rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). First, basic facts about the ADA are explained, including a clause by clause explanation of the Act's definition of a disability. Next, the impact of the ADA is outlined for the application phase, the job interview, the employment decision, on the job, and job accommodations. Adjustment to a disability and deciding where, when, and how to disclose a disability to a potential employer are covered next. Specific job search skills are considered in sections on appearance and body language in the job interview; assessment of work abilities, interests, and values; completing application forms; preparing a cover letter; preparing a resume; interview skills; the job search plan; and job leads. Other sections address job retention, vocational rehabilitation services, benefits, and facts about employees with disabilities. The final section lists 15 organizational resources with addresses and telephone numbers. (DB)

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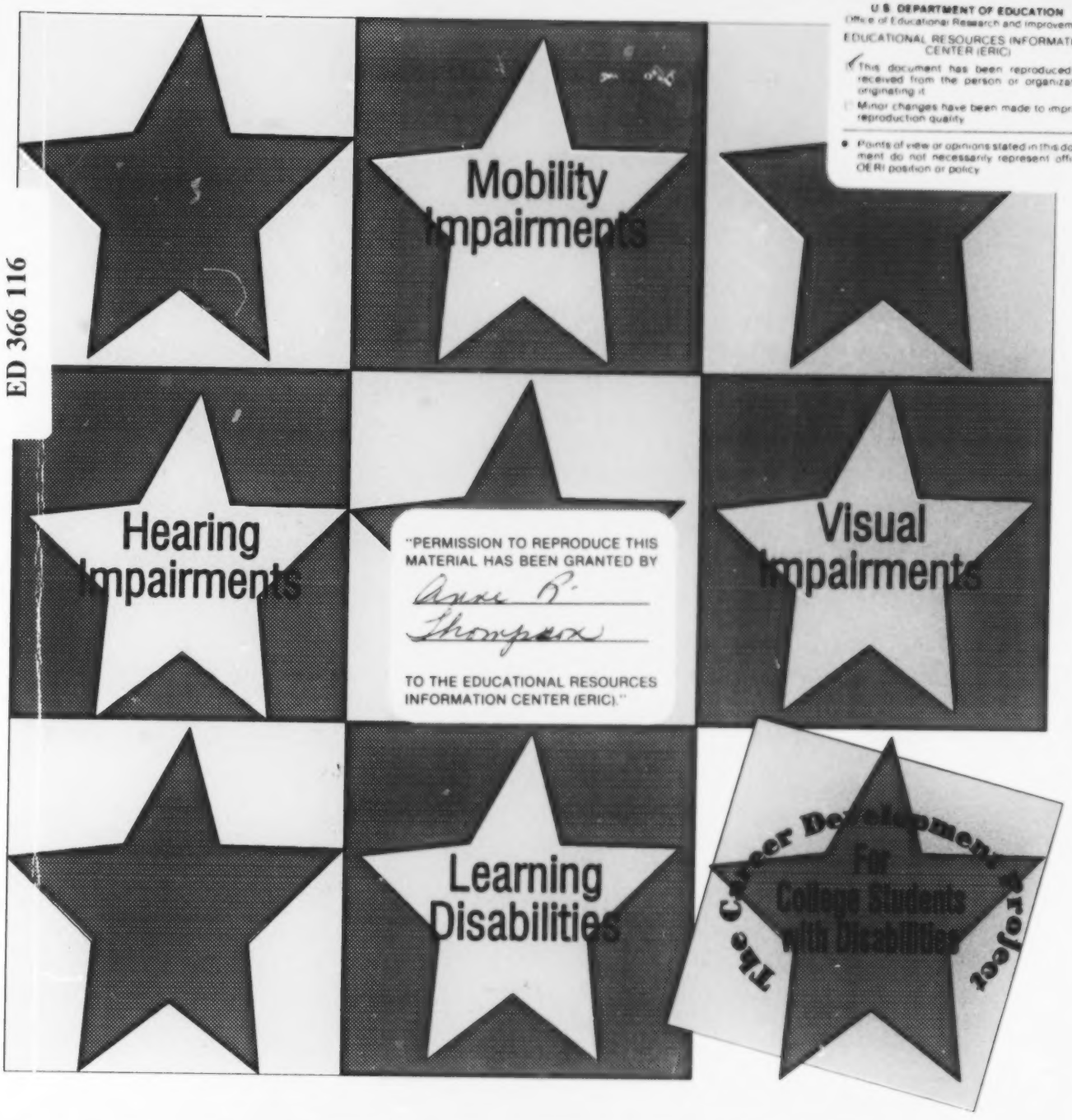

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EMPLOYMENT GUIDE

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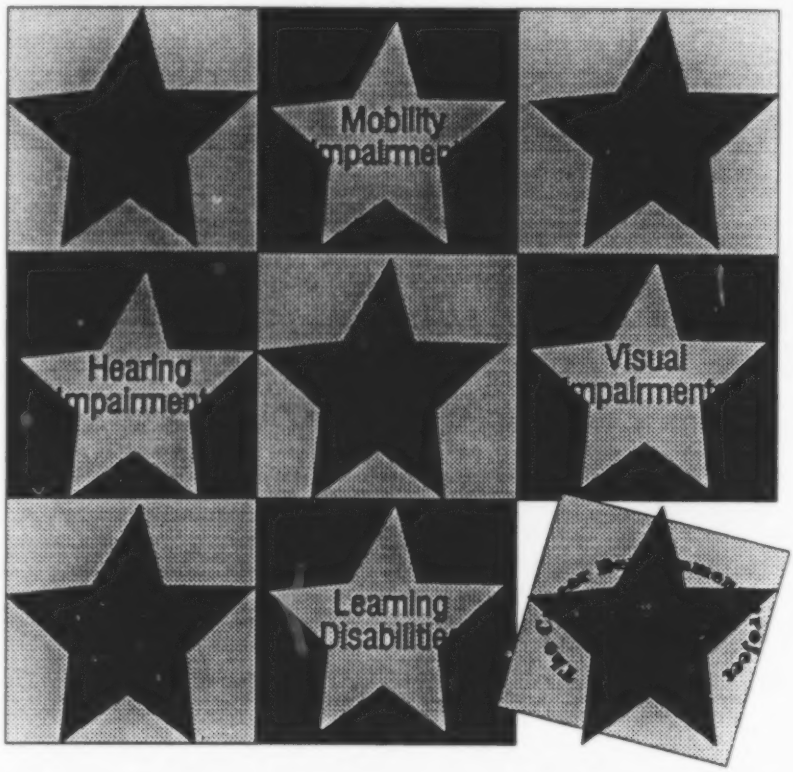

EMPLOYMENT GUIDE

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Note

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Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Questions and Answers about the ADA	2
What does the ADA mean to the Job Applicant with a Disability	8
Adjustment to a Disability	11
Where, When, and How to Disclose a Disability to a Potential Employer	13
Appearance and Body Language in the Job Interview	16
Assessment of Work Abilities, Interests, and Values	20
Completing Application Forms	22
Preparing a Cover Letter	24
Preparing a Resume	26
Interview Skills	29
Job Search Plan	37
Job Leads	42
Job Retention	45
Vocational Rehabilitation Services	47
What You Need to Know about Benefits	48
Facts about Employees with Disabilities	50
Resources	52

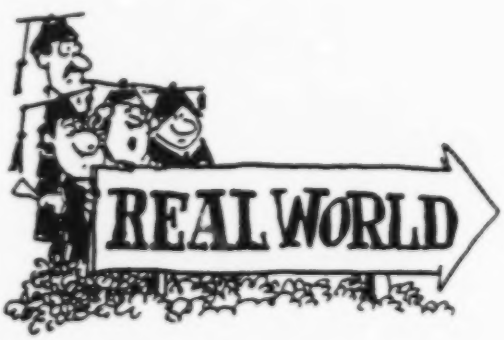
Introduction

What do college graduates with disabilities need to assist them in their career planning? Do some of their needs differ from those of nondisabled college graduates? What do career planning counselors need to know to provide services for college students with disabilities?

The increasing number of students with disabilities on college campuses provides new challenges to college career planning counselors. College graduates with disabilities also will present new challenges to vocational rehabilitation counselors as they work to assist these graduates into professional employment.

College students with disabilities have the same needs in their career planning as nondisabled students but they also require additional considerations. College students with disabilities need to know the traditional job seeking skills that the nondisabled students learn; but they require additional skill training in areas related to their disability.

This manual is a guide for college students with disabilities in their preparation for employment. It is also designed as a guide for counselors who assist students with disabilities to achieve their career goals.



about the Americans with Disabilities Act

Understanding the ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), P.L. 101-336, applies to employers who have more than 25 employees. Employers of 15 or more employees are covered by July 26, 1994. This legislation prohibits employment discrimination against persons with disabilities. It provides this protection during the application and interview processes, after an offer of employment has been made, and continues after the individual with a disability has begun working. The Americans with Disabilities Act provides a number of definitions which are important for equal-opportunity for persons with disabilities.

DISABILITY

A. An individual having a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of the individual;
B. An individual having a record of such an impairment;
C. An individual regarded as having such an impairment.

MAJOR LIFE ACTIVITIES

Includes such activities as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

SUBSTANTIALLY LIMITS

Occurs if the individual is <u>unable</u> to perform a major life activity or if the individual is <u>significantly restricted</u> in a major life activity when compared with the average person in the general population. Determined by considering (a) the nature and severity of the impairment, (b) the duration or expected duration of the impairment, and (c) the permanent or long-term impact of or resulting from the impairment.

<u>EXAMPLES</u>

- An individual having paraplegia would be significantly limited in the major activity of walking.
- An individual having blindness would be unable to perform the major life activity of seeing.
- An individual with chronic heart disease would have significant limitations in performing manual tasks.
- An individual with a diagnosed learning disability would have significant limitations in the major activity of learning.

RECORD OF IMPAIRMENT

Includes persons previously having a physical or mental impairment which substantially limited a major life activity, but who no longer have such an impairment. Also, includes those who have been misdiagnosed as having such an impairment.

EXAMPLES

- An individual who has been successfully treated for cancer.
- An individual who has been misdiagnosed as being HIV positive.

REGARDED AS HAVING AN IMPAIRMENT

Includes persons who have an impairment which does not substantially limit a major life activity, but are regarded as having significant limitations based on the existence of the disability and those who have no impairments but are treated as having substantially limiting impairments.

EXAMPLES

- An individual who is HIV positive but has not developed symptoms of AIDS.
- An individual who has mild limitations in physical functioning, but who is denied employment on the assumption that the disability would be more significantly limiting.

QUALIFIED PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

An individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable accommodation, could perform the essential functions of the job that the individual holds or desires to hold.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

The fundamental job duties of the position that the person with a disability holds or desires to hold. Does not include marginal job duties. A job duty may be considered essential when:

A. the position exists to perform the function;
B. there are only a limited number of employees to whom the function could be distributed;
C. the function is so highly specialized that the individual would be hired for his or her ability to perform the function (it could not be distributed to other employees).

Impact of the ADA

Application Phase

Employers may not engage in practices which may potentially limit an applicant's equal-employment opportunities. Activities which are specifically prohibited during the application stage include the following:

A. Requiring preemployment medical examinations (Medical examinations may be required after an offer of employment has been made, provided that this is required of all persons offered jobs in the same class of jobs).

B. Asking about the existence of a disability or health status on an application for employment form (unless required to do so for Affirmative Action reporting under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973).

C. Requiring a qualification test which does not reflect the essential functions of the job.

D. Not providing accommodations for the known limitations of an applicant's disability on a qualification test when such an accommodation would allow equal-opportunity on the test.

E. Using qualification standards (such as lifting requirements) which might screen out persons with disabilities unless these standards reflect the essential functions of the job.

The Job Interview

Activities which are prohibited during the job interview include the following:

A. Asking the individual about the existence of a disability.

Employers may only ask if the individual can perform the essential functions of the job for which he or she is interviewing and if the individual will need accommodations in order to perform these essential functions. The individual may be asked to demonstrate how he or she could perform the essential functions of the job. For nonobservable disabilities, the individual may be asked to provide documentation of the need for accommodation. Because employers may ask an individual to demonstrate how he or she could perform the essential functions of the job, it is critical that persons with disabilities be strong self-advocates. Counselors working with these persons must help prepare them to fully understand their skills, the demands of jobs, and how to describe their accommodation needs to employers.

B. Interviewing in a nonaccessible location or manner

It is the responsibility of the interviewee to let the employer know in advance that accommodations will be needed for the interview. Employers should consider holding all interviews in facilities which are physically accessible to persons with disabilities.

C. Making inquires about the severity or nature of the disability.

D. Making inquires about any medical treatment associated with the disability.

The Employment Decision

Employers may not:

A. Deny persons with disabilities employment solely on the basis of the existence of the disability.

B. Deny person with disabilities employment based on the need to provide reasonable accommodation, unless such an accommodation would pose an undue hardship for the employer.

C. Deny persons with disabilities employment because of myths, stereotypes, or misconceptions about persons with various types of disabilities (or disabilities in general.

On the Job

Employers may not:

A. Limit the activities of a person with a disability because of assumptions about what is "best" for the individual.

B. Have segregated office spaces, breakrooms, lunch rooms, or lounges.

C. Fail to provide a reasonable accommodation which would allow the individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of the job.

D. Deny equal access to any health insurance coverage provided for other employees.

E. Deny promotion based on the existence of the disability or need for accommodation.

F. Deny access to employer sponsored training based on the existence of the disability or the need for accommodation.

Asking for Job Accommodation

The ADA requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities that will allow them to perform the essential functions of a job. It is the responsibility of the individual having a disability to make known the need for accommodation. Specific accommodations which may be required include:

A. Altering existing facilities to make them accessible.
B. Job restructuring.
C. Modified work schedules.
D. Reassignment to a vacant position.
E. Modifying examinations, training materials, or policies.
F. Providing qualified readers or interpreters.

These are examples only and are not meant to be exhaustive. Accommodations are highly individualized to the person's disability and needs.

Counselors working with persons with disabilities can use a number of techniques for helping their clients prepare for asking for job accommodations. Mock interviews can be one useful approach. Also, job shadowing may be used. In job shadowing, the individual with a disability would observe someone performing the type of job that they wish to hold. This will give them a "hands-on" perspective on the types of accommodations they would need. It is much stronger if the individual can state specific types of accommodations, rather than generalities, and can justify verbally why the accommodation is needed.

Responsibilities

Counselors working with persons with disabilities can better serve their clients if they teach their client to assume responsibility in the job-seeking process. Specific responsibilities that clients should be taught to assume include:

A. being aware of their right to equal-employment opportunity under the ADA
B. being sure that they meet the entry-level criteria for jobs of interest by obtaining the appropriate education, skills, experience, licensure, etc.
C. preparing an excellent resume which clearly describes their qualifications
D. knowing exactly what each job they apply for involves so they can identify and articulate their accommodation needs
E. practicing interviewing so that they are comfortable describing their accommodation needs
F. letting employers know in advance if accommodations will be needed during the application and interview stages
G. being assertive, when necessary.

What does the ADA mean to the Job Applicant with a Disability?

Importance of the Americans with Disabilities Act

The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act has lead to changes in discriminatory employment practices toward persons with disabilities. Job applicants with disabilities are now guaranteed their rights to equal opportunities in the employment process. Therefore, an awareness of the principles and the terms of the ADA is now essential in the job search for individuals with disabilities. However, the number of new employment opportunities that the ADA will open depends not only on the enforcement of the law, but how energetically persons with disabilities pursue their employment options. The passage of the ADA also places new requirements upon the job applicant with a disability.

Responsibilities of the applicant include:

- **Put the employer at ease.**
  Interviewers may be uncomfortable about asking questions of an applicant with a disability. The interviewer may fear that the questions are not appropriate under the ADA, or the interviewer may not know how to discuss job related matters with an applicant with a disability. The job applicant can take the initiative to neutralize the discomfort of the interviewer by being open and honest about disability related information. The applicant might say:
  - "You may be wondering how I can perform the duties of this job. Let me tell you."
  - "Have you ever interviewed a person with (type of disability) before? Let me tell you how I am able to do the things that a nondisabled person would do in this job."

- **Be prepared to bring up accommodation if the employer does not ask.**
  The ADA requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities that will allow them to perform the essential functions of a job. Employers are not required to purchase the most expensive accommodation. The employer is only required to provide what is necessary to do the job.

- **Become a technical expert on reasonable job accommodation.**
  Individuals with disabilities should research the company, study the job analysis, and know their individual needs before going to the interview. The job applicant should go to the interview prepared to say, "These are the accommodations I will need to perform the duties of this job. Here is the cost and the names of places where it can be purchased. The other accommodation needs that I have will not cost the company but are simply (Example: four blocks to raise the desk to fit my wheelchair)."

- **Know the tax credits for hiring individuals with disabilities.**
  See the section titled What You Need to Know about Benefits on page 48.

- **Know the services that can be provided by social agencies.**
  Individuals with disabilities should check with the social agencies to learn what training and accommodations may be available to be able to do the job. See the Resources section in this Guide for a listing of many agencies.

Needs of the job applicant include:

- Awareness of the ADA - know the civil rights.
- Awareness of the employer's needs.
- Ability to discuss issues and options in a nonthreatening manner.
- Skill to demonstrate the willingness to compromise for the good of the employer and yourself.

Impact of the ADA on the job interview:

- Job descriptions will be more detailed. Therefore, applicants can better understand whether they can or cannot perform the duties of a particular job. Job applicants can study the job analysis and be prepared to describe, or to demonstrate how they will do the job. This means applicants should feel confident that they can do the job for which they are applying.

- Employers may have fears in the interview. Job applicants with disabilites need to be aware of these fears and use their communication skills to avert the employers' concerns. These fears include:
  - People with disabilities have unrealistic expectations.
  - Applicants may demand costly reasonable accommodations due to a misinterpretation of the law.
  - Misinterpretation of the law may lead to a lawsuit.

The section about the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title I Employment, should be read carefully and understood before persons with disabilities begin their job search.

Adjustment to a Disability

Adjustment to a Disability to be Prepared for the Job Search

Job seekers with disabilities who are prepared for employment and ready to go to work have made successful adjustments in coping with their disability. Job seekers with disabilities who feel confident about themselves can convince a potential employer that they can do the job.

Coping and adapting to a disabling condition are ongoing processes that involve thoughts, behaviors, and feelings. It is important for persons with disabilities who are entering the job search to check themselves at intervals to measure how successfully they are coping. Asking some of the following questions can be helpful as a continuing measure of effective coping skills.

- I try to focus on what I can do, not on things I cannot do.
- I do not let my disability be the main focus of my life.
- I continue to initiate new activities, interests, and friendships.
- I am comfortable asking for help when I need it and refusing help from someone when I don't need it.
- I have a sense of humor.
- I have a support system (family, colleagues, friends).
- I continue to gather facts about my condition from experts.
- I practice good health habits.
- I share coping strategies with others who have my same disability.
- I actively seek solutions to problems.
- I look for possibilities rather than limitations.
- I continue to experience value changes as necessary in my life.

Where, When, and How to Disclose a Disability to a Potential Employer

The Issue of Disability Disclosure

Job seekers with invisible disabilities:

Applicants with invisible disabilities which do not affect the performance of the job and do not require any job accommodations may choose not to disclose to the employer. Applicants with invisible disabilities who require job accommodations can disclose their disability to an employer in the interview following the same basic rules of disclosure for persons with visible disabilities.

Job seekers with visible disabilities:

Decisions about disclosure are one of the most important questions to be resolved in the job search process. The best guideline in making the decision is whether this time and this place and in this way will contribute to the employer's decision to hire. If the employer will see the disability as a positive for hiring - then disclose early. Employers who may be positive would include organizations that serve persons with disabilities, companies that receive federal grants, companies that have a policy for hiring persons with disabilities. It is important for the job seeker to research the company.

Possible times to disclose include:

· COVER LETTER

Generally this is not the best time to disclose as the job seeker may not get the interview. If the job seeker has a job match that the disability helps meet, then this may be the best time to disclose.

· RESUME

Once again, this is not the best time to disclose in most cases as the job seeker may not get the interview. It would be appropriate to disclose if the company has a positive attitude toward hiring persons with disabilities. If the job seeker discloses in the resume, follow the three basic disclosure rules: **keep it brief, do not use medical terms, and keep it job related**.

· TELEPHONE CALL FOR AN INTERVIEW

If the applicant uses a wheelchair, will need a sighted guide, or other accommodation for the interview, it is essential to disclose here to assure accessibility. The rule here is to disclose only after the time and place for the interview have been established and applicants have had the opportunity to point out some of their skills and abilities. In conclusion of setting up a time and place for the interview, the applicant might say: "I use a wheelchair, can you tell me where I will find the accessible entrance.", or "I have a visual impairment and may need a guide the first time to orient me." Exception to the rule: if a secretary calls to set up the interview then set the time and place. **Do not disclose to the secretary.** Call the employer or interviewer back and disclose with a carefully prepared script.

· APPLICATION FORM

Any questions that cannot be answered without disclosing on the application form may be answered by a statement such as, "will discuss". Application forms may not ask if the job applicant has a disability but may ask about limitations in performance of the essential job functions.

· INTERVIEW

Disclosing a visible disability for the first time at the interview may cause awkward situations and a shock effect on the employer. Some job seekers still prefer this time and capitalize on the opportunity to sell their abilities face to face with an employer. Applicants who choose this time need to follow the

Basic Rules for a Good Disclosure:

1. Script the disclosure and rehearse the script.
2. Avoid medical terms and do not give medical history.
3. Keep it brief - remember the employer is only interested in whether the applicant can do the job.
4. Keep it job related.
5. Point out abilities developed from living with a disability. For example: "Being a wheelchair user has enabled me to develop special skills in advance planning and problem solving. I have had many opportunities to perfect my organizational skills."

After disclosing a disability, the job applicant should take the initiative in discussing the accommodation needed to perform the basic function of the job. The employer is not required to bring up accommodation and may expect the job applicant to discuss accommodation if any is needed.

Disclosure is a personal matter. Decisions about time, place, and how should be based on the best way to get the interview and then get the job offer. Applicants who are able to disclose in a manner that is comfortable to them and focuses on their abilities will impress the interviewer that they are capable and ready to go to work.

Appearance and Body Language in the Job Interview

16

Appearance in the Job Interview

Studies indicate that most employers make the decision to hire in the first minutes of the interview. The employer begins forming an opinion of the job applicant from the moment of meeting. Therefore, appearance plays a crucial role in the impression that the job applicant makes on the employer.

Guidelines for all job seekers with disabilities:

- Dress one step above what you would be expected to wear in this kind of work every day.
- Dress conservatively. Dark colors are preferable with a white shirt/blouse, dark shoes, and conservative tie.
- Be conservative on accessories such as jewelry, purse, belt, and be sure they match.
- Have a dress rehearsal several days before the interview. Ask someone to give you feedback on how you look. Wear your interview clothing long enough to feel comfortable in dress clothes before you go for your interview.
- Be clean and neat in haircut and fingernails.
- Use perfume, make-up or shaving lotion sparingly.

Special considerations for applicants who have a visual impairment or blindness:

Persons with visual impairments or blindness need to ask a sighted person to check their clothing for appropriateness before going to an interview. It is helpful to develop a code for marking clothing on the inside with small pieces of velcro cut in various shapes. This touch system lets the dresser know which piece of clothing they have selected to wear. Job applicants who use a guide dog need to be certain that their dog is well groomed before an interview.

17

Special considerations for applicants who use wheelchairs:

Persons who use wheelchairs need special planning to obtain appropriate interview clothing. It is frequently necessary for the student to plan a budget in advance and save money for the expense of buying a suit, shirt/blouse, tie, shoes, socks. Total cost may be between $250-$350 if the student needs to purchase the entire outfit.

Persons who use wheelchairs require special alterations in their dress clothes to obtain a neat seated appearance. Suits may be purchased at regular clothing outlets and altered for a seated fit. Clothing that is specially designed to fit in a seated position can be bought from mail order catalogues that specialize in clothing for wheelchair users.

Clothing that is specially designed to look neat in the seated position include several unique features. The suit jackets are cut shorter to stay flat when seated and have back shoulder action pleats for ease of movement and comfort. The slacks have front pleats for style and elastic back waistbands to prevent trousers sliding down. The slacks also have hidden inseam pockets on the side and behind-the-calf welt pockets. Skirts are smoothly tailored across the front, have elastic waistband back, hidden velcro side openings and come in ankle lengths.

To obtain information or catalogues see the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory under Hospital Equipment and Supplies. Ordering clothes or buying ready made and getting necessary alterations takes time. It is important to plan ahead to be ready for the job interview.

A clean, well maintained wheelchair is important in the job interview and in the workplace. Form the habit of routine chair inspections to see if the wheels and frame are free of rain spatters and dirt. If you need assistance, ask a friend or your attendant to inspect your chair and provide a wipe down. Be sure to keep arm rests and other areas that receive constant wear in good repair. Also, if push gloves are used, be sure the gloves worn to an interview are neat and not frayed or worn.

Body Language in the Job Interview

Body language is nonverbal communication and conveys a message to the employer that can say you are alert, attractive, interested, enthusiastic, and self-confident. Achieving positive nonverbal communication requires practice. Study the following guidelines to improve your nonverbal behavior.

Job seekers who use wheelchairs:

- Sit in front of a mirror and talk to yourself. Notice if you are sitting up straight with your hands in your lap. Ask yourself a stressful interview question and answer it. Watch for nervous habits.
- Ask a friend to critique your posture and eye contact and give you constructive feedback.
- Make yourself aware of habits that are distracting to the interviewer (leaning to one side of the chair, unnecessary hand gestures, yawning, leaning your head on your hand).
- Spend time on getting advice from others on your appearance (makeup, haircut, hairstyle, manicure).
- Ask another person for feedback on your handshake. If you cannot shake hands, prepare and practice your script: "I would like to shake your hand, but I hope my smile will let you know that I am glad to be here."
- Practice your eye contact. Remember in an interview you will want to use direct eye contact about 50% of the time. When not using eye contact, simply look down or slightly to the side. Avoid letting your gaze dart around the room or looking up at the ceiling.

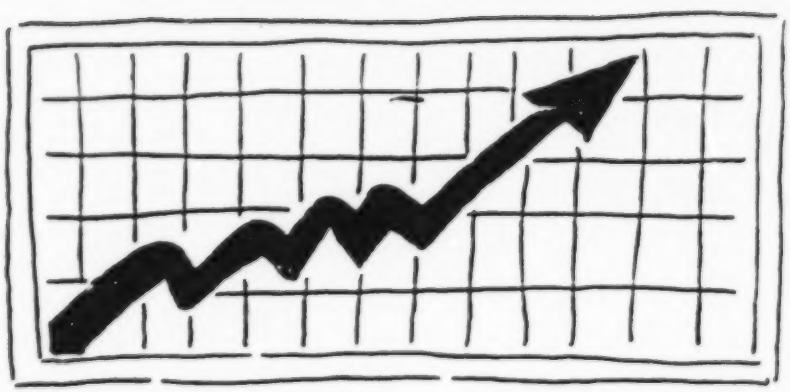
Job seekers who have a visual impairment or blindness:

- Recognize that eye contact is an important aspect of attentiveness for people who are sighted.
- Practice directing your face to the voice of the person your are speaking with.
- Ask a business acquaintance to permit you to practice your interview skills and nonverbal behavior and provide you with feedback.
- Extend your arm to encourage the interviewer to shake your hand.
- Ask for feedback from sighted others about your nonverbal behavior (rocking motions, nervous hand movements, head turned down or up).
- If you find it difficult to maintain eye contact, make a brief statement to the interviewer. "I have a hard time focusing my eyes on you, but I am certainly listening".
- Practice keeping your hands resting in your lap or on the arms of the chair.
- If you use a cane, fold it quietly away or place it by your side but do not be tempted to handle it during the interview. Interviewers who are sighted may find this distracting. It may also indicate you are nervous and you want to appear self-confident.

Job seekers with a hearing impairment or deafness:

- Pay attention to your facial expressions. Warm smile, alert positive eye contact.
- If you read lips, prepare your script and practice delivering it in a positive casual manner. "I hope you won't mind speaking a little slower and looking at me, that helps me have full communication."

Assessment of Work Abilities, Interests, and Values



The Importance of Assessment

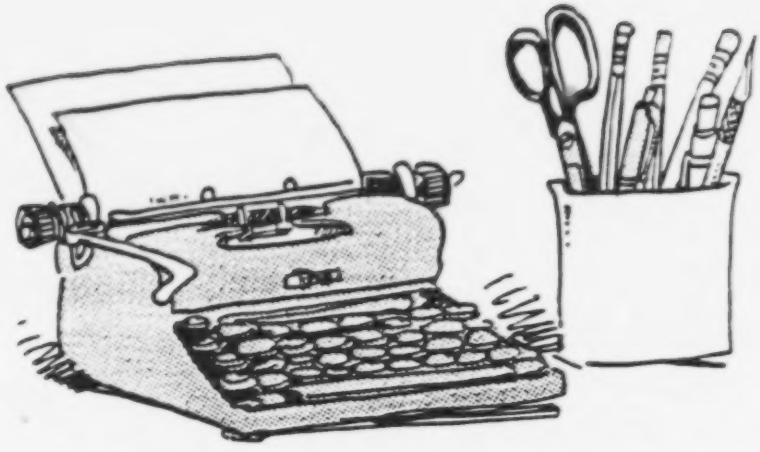
Assessment of work skills and abilities is important to career planning. College students with disabilities need to conduct a thorough self-assessment to be aware of the unique contributions they can make to the world of work. The campus career services office offers comprehensive assessment instruments and career counseling to assist students in their career planning.

The five basic traits and factors that can be assessed by various instruments are:

1. Achievement - designed to reveal how much an individual has learned.
2. Ability - measures maximum performance and the level of present ability to perform a task.
3. Aptitude - reveals the probable future level of ability to perform a task.
4. Interests - occupations can be predicted better from interests than from aptitude for individuals with many abilities who are able to choose from a wide range of occupations.
5. Values - two types are of importance: general values and work-related values. The counselor helps the client find ways to satisfy their values through their career choice.

Selecting appropriate assessment instruments requires an understanding of the concepts of reliability and validity. It must be remembered when testing a specific population such as people with disabilities, the reliability and validity figures become suspect and the results must be weighed accordingly. It is important for the counselor to spend time discussing assessment results with the student.

Completing Application Forms



What You Need to Know about the Job Application Form

The employer may ask you to fill out a job application form even though you have a resume and cover letter. Employers use job application forms:

- to screen job applicants based on a standardized set of questions
- to insure that necessary information is correct and available
- to verify information presented on the resume

Knowing how to complete the application form may be essential to your success in the job search. Follow these guidelines in completing the application form.

- The form should be neatly typed or printed with dark ink. You may be asked to fill out the application form when you arrive at the interview site. Purchase an erasable pen in advance and carry two pens with you to be prepared.
- Answer all relevant questions; legally you are not required to give your birthdate, nationality, or disability.
- Look for a special employment equity program on the application to indicate the employer recruits individuals from designated groups.
- Do not write "see resume" on the application form.
- Write N/A if a question does not apply to you.
- Be positive. If answering the question truthfully gives the employer a negative impression, then write "will discuss".
- Look for places to provide additional positive information about yourself. Fill in gaps in employment with constructive activities you were pursuing (in school, received career counseling, part-time work, volunteer). Avoid using specific employment dates if they display your gaps.
- If you have limited or no work experience, write in what you do have (volunteer service, education, training, skills, hobbies). Write in a positive statement, "My studies in college took all my spare time but I am now ready to work and pursue my chosen career."
- If asked if you have any physical or health limitation that would prevent you from performing this job, answer, "no". Remember you are only applying for jobs that you can handle. This is not the best place to disclose or to ask for accommodation.
- Be truthful.
- Use the additional information section to advise the employer of your abilities to do this job.
- Proofread the form for errors. If there is time ask someone to review the application form for you.

Preparing a Cover Letter

The Cover Letter

No resume should be sent without a cover letter. The purpose of the cover letter is to entice the employer to read your resume. The cover letter should be created individually for every position. Put your career objective in the cover letter, not on the resume. This way you can make it fit the position. Find the correct name of the person in the company who is in charge of hiring and address your cover letter to that person. It is important to send cover letters to specific people by their name.

The cover letter has three parts:

- **Opening** - explains why you are writing.
- **Main body** - lists two or three of your main accomplishments and provides reader with a reason to want to read your resume.
- **Closing** - expresses a desire for further communication and may indicate how you plan to follow up.

Check to be certain your cover letter addresses the current job opening and the skills you have to meet the job requirements. Include as many job related facts about yourself as possible. You want your cover letter and resume to get you on the short list to be interviewed. A good cover letter takes time to prepare.

Disclose your disability in the cover letter **only** if you are certain that it will be viewed as a positive to hire.

Keep in mind when writing a cover letter:

- Use short sentences with action words and phrases.
- Keep it short, one page.
- Always use a word processor and a laser printer.
- Address your letter to a person, not "Dear Sir."
- Proof read and ask a business acquaintance to proof.
- Check for layout and balance on the page.
- Use high quality paper in white, off-white, or cream color.
- Use matching business envelopes.
- Include your name, address and telephone number.
- Make each letter an original.
- Date the letter.
- Time your letter to arrive on the middle days of the week.
- Keep copies.
- Follow up at the time stated in the letter.

Preparing a Resume

26

Purpose of the resume

- To get you an interview
- To introduce your education, experience, and skills
- To provide a reminder of you after the interview

Preparation of a resume

- Make it brief and informative.
- Make it present a concise overview of your skills.
- Use statements that begin with a verb.
- Use strong verbs to demonstrate you get things accomplished.
- Avoid complete sentences and the use of "I".
- Make items indicate you work well with people.
- Type your resume, leave white space, reproduce clear copies.
- Use the form that presents you in the best light
  (chronological-begin with most recent events and move back;
  functional-highlights skill areas without citing dates).
- Ask others to proofread and critique.
- Make it attractive-it represents you.

If you have little or no work experience, make the most of your volunteer work, hobbies, recreation activities, or activities in organizations.

Join professional organizations in your major and seek election for an office or volunteer to serve on committees to gain experience to include in your resume.

Include skills or special abilities section to indicate job-related expertise. Examples:

- Expert in WordPefect 5.1
- Planned and budgeted for class trip
- Fluent in French
- Fluent in sign language
- Traveled in Mexico
- Photographer
- Sold ads for school paper
- Coordinated community service project

There are many excellent books on how to write a resume that are available in bookstores. Examples of many types of resumes are available in the campus career services office. Reviewing different types of resumes can be helpful in selecting the type that best fits the student. Sample resumes provide ideas and reminders of items to include.

Disability Disclosure

Decide whether disclosing your disability in your resume is a plus or a minus for your opportunity to be interviewed. If you decide not to disclose, consider omitting disability related organizations. If you decide to disclose use your activities in disability related organizations as a way to introduce your disability.

References

An important part of your job search is the selection of your references. In fact, it is so important that you should begin cultivating your references early in your college career. References are persons who know your abilities and competencies through:

- work experiences
- campus activities
- class participation
- volunteer services
- the informational interview

Always be sure that the person you are using as a reference knows your strengths and your abilities. It is especially useful if they have seen you perform. You may want to provide your references with your resume to give them background information about you.

An effective reference is one that can describe your qualifications for a particulr position. Therefore, inform your references of the job duties that you will be expected to perform.

Your references should be specific for the job you are seeking, so having a few references available to use and changing them as necessary is a good idea.

Always request permission beforehand from a person you plan to use as a reference. No one should be surprised by a phone call or a letter from a job source. It is also a good idea to write and thank your references for their time and efforts whether you get the job or not.

There are two ways to present your references to an employer:

- You may attach a separate page to your resume that is in the same form as your resume and provides the reference's name, position, employment, address, and telephone number. This is an appropriate way to provide your references especially if the employer knows the references.
- You may indicate at the bottom of your resume that references will be provided upon request. This will permit you to select the particular references that you think will be more influential for your getting this position.

Interview Skills

Interviewing for Success

The job applicant with a disability who has carefully studied this Guide is now aware of many of the necessities for a good interview. A checklist of the interview preparation include:

_____ Understanding of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

_____ Developing skills in coping and adapting to a disability.

_____ Knowing where, when, and how to disclose a disability.

_____ Practicing appropriate appearance and nonverbal communication.

_____ Knowing how to complete job application forms.

_____ Writing an impressive cover letter and resume.

_____ Developing good references.

In addition, job applicants who are successful in the interview:

_____ Can express themselves clearly using proper grammar.

_____ Have researched the company.

_____ Know their career goals and objectives.

_____ Have formulated questions to ask about the job.

_____ Have good self-presentation skills.

_____ Can tell and/or demonstrate to the employer how they will perform the essential duties of the job.

_____ Can keep the focus of the interview on the match between their skills and abilities and the needs of the employer.

Thinking about the purpose of an interview can be helpful in making final preparation.

Some of the key purposes for the applicant are:

- To communicate his/her skills and abilities to do the job.
- To gain additional information about the job and the company.
- To ask for any necessary job accommodations.

The employer's purposes for the interview are to assess and attempt to determine the applicant's:

- Appearance and nonverbal communication.
- Work capabilities.
- Presentation skills.
- Ability to get along with others.
- Motivation and potential for career success.
- Fit into the environment of the employer's work place.
- Acceptance of responsibility.
- Maturity.
- Personality, poise, sense of humor.
- Career goals.

Use the Informational Interview

The purpose of an informational interview is to increase the network of professional contacts and possible job opportunities. The job seeker requests the interview and goes with a prepared list of questions and a well developed script to present his or her employment qualifications. Questions for the interview may include some of the following:

- Do you know of openings for someone with my qualifications?
- Do you know of companies that are hiring?
- Can you suggest other areas that are related to my career that might have openings?
- Could you tell me of other people who may provide information for me about job openings in my area? If so, may I say that you suggested I contact this company?
- Would you be willing to critique my resume and offer suggestions?
- How did you train for this job?

Before the informational interview, be sure to plan and practice your self-presentation skills. Decide on the most effective way to disclose your disability so that the focus of the interview will be on employment issues. Learn something about the person you are interviewing with and the company before the interview. Be a good listener as questions are answered. Complete the interview in a timely manner by thanking the person for their help. Be certain to write a thank you letter after the interview.

Questions to be Prepared for in the Interview

- **Tell me about yourself.**

  Now is when you need to have rehearsed an answer. This is not the time for an autobiography. Let the interviewer know about your personality and work ethic. Use this opportunity to point out your strengths. Some traits to emphasize include: honesty, integrity, enthusiasm, being a team player and determination.

  "I put 100% into everything I do, regardless of it being work or cooking. I value excellence and enjoy being a part of a team that is enjoyable and productive."

- **Why do you want to work here?**

  You must have done some research on the company in order to answer this question. The main reasons should relate to the fit of your skills to the job.

  "After researching the company and meeting people who work here, it seems like I could fit in and complement your team! I enjoy being a part of a team that shares the values that make this possible."

- **Where do you see yourself in five years?**

  The best bet is to include being regarded as a true professional and team player in your answer. When it comes to promotion, ask what opportunities exist within the company. "I see myself working for this company. It seems that _____ is where the largest growth is going to be based on my research and what you've told me. That's where the effort is needed and where I can help the company reach its goals."

- **Why is there such a long gap in your employment?**

  You should offer a brief explanation and also convince the interviewer that this won't affect your ability to do the job. It may be appropriate for you to explain your disability here. Summarize by saying, "I have learned the value of hard work and overcoming hardship. I have set my career goals and have a plan for achieving them."

· **Why should I hire you?**

The answer should be short, enthusiastic and to the point highlighting your experience with the specific needs of the company. Relate your skills to the description of the job that the interviewer gave you. You could mention your disability here in terms of skills gained:
"Being in a wheelchair has made it necessary for me to develop good time management skills."
"Since my accident, I have found it necessary to seek a variety of solutions to problems that come up. I am very good at seeing more than one way to solve a problem."
"I have a great deal of perseverance and I do not let obstacles stop me from finding solutions."
"I am a hard working person and I enjoy working with all types of people."

· **What are your weaknesses?**

Be honest, yet discreet. Mention a weakness, but talk about the positive side of it. Under stand your weaknesses and have explanations. Do not refer to your disability as a weakness.
"I expect a lot out of my co-workers and myself. Sometimes I get impatient when others don't finish their part."

·**What experience do you have that relates to this job?**

The answer should be specific and complete and include more than the title and place of previous employment. A good script should be prepared in advance and contain the applicant's specific skills, general abilities, education, training, life experience, volunteer work and interests.
"As a student worker at the registrar's office, I learned that I relate well to people and I can work well with others."
"I have two years of experience in COBOL, FORTRAN, and BASIC computer languages."
"As a volunteer in the literacy program I learned much about how children learn and gained skills in teaching."

· **Do you have any impairments, physical or mental, which would interfere with your ability to perform the job?**

The answer is no! The interviewer may be afraid that you will be absent from work. You need to emphasize that your disability will not cause you to be late or absent from work. You should answer this question honestly.
"I have had diabetes for _____ years, but I control it successfully. It has never become a factor in my work because it has nothing to do with my performance on the job."

Questions to be Prepared to Ask in the Interview:

When the employer asks, "Do you have any questions?", it is crucial for the applicant to have a prepared list of questions that demonstrate interest and knowledge of the company.

Appropriate questions may include:

- Asking about specific duties of the position to determine the fit between the applicant's qualifications and the requirements of the job.
- Determining what specific qualities the employer is looking for in the applicants.
- Obtaining information about promotion and advancement in the organization.
- Learning about the company's training program.
- Asking about travel requirements of the job.

How to Handle Improper Questions in the Interview

Job applicants have the right to decline to answer any question that is personal and not related to the job. Some of these questions are:

- How old are you?
- What caused your disability?
- Are you married?

It is important for job applicants to be prepared to handle questions that may be discriminatory. The manner in which one responds is as important as what is said. Answer honestly and use the question to inform the employer. If it is necessary to decline to answer the question, applicants may do so tactfully with care not to be confrontive. A good response may be: "I am wondering why you asked that question. Can you tell me how it relates to this job?" A relaxed straightforward answer that avoids confrontation will best serve the goal of the applicant which is to get the job.

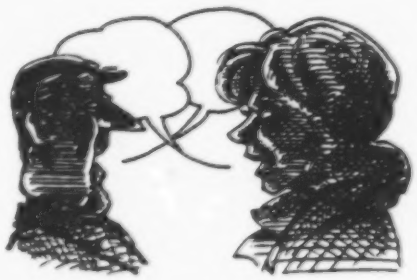
Situational Interviewing

Situational interviewing involves questions based on actual experience. This method is frequently used in the job interview. When employers ask questions about how you would respond in a certain situation, they can gain information about how you would perform on the job. Job applicants with disabilities need to script answers to the open-ended questions most frequently asked in the job interview.

Examples of questions:

- "Describe a personal crisis you went through and how you solved it?"
- "Tell me about a time that you were responsible for planning and organizing something."
- "If I were to ask your advisor to describe you, what do you think he/she might say?"
- "What about this organization attracted you to apply?"
- "Tell me about a mistake you made and the steps you took to rectify the situation."

Open ended questions may provide job seekers with disabilities the opportunity to discuss how their disability enabled them to gain certain skills such as, organizational skills and planning skills.



After the Interview

Keep a card file on each interview. Record the interviewer's name (may ask for business card) and a brief record of what was said in the interview. Make a note of areas in the interview that need improvement. Plan how to improve those interview skills.

Be sure to write the interviewer a thank-you letter as soon as possible. Style your thank-you letter with a sales message about yourself. Point out your genuine interest in the position and how you feel you are qualified to do the job. Indicate a time when you will check back with the interviewer to learn how the search to fill the position is progressing. Thank the interviewer for the time and consideration you were given and state that you enjoyed meeting him/her.

Job Search Plan

The Job Search Plan

Job seeking is a time consuming process, but it is possible to find the job that you want. Not only does finding the right job require a great deal of time, but it also requires dedication and practice. If you plan ahead, keep organized, and spend the appropriate amount of time conducting your job search, you will be successful in finding employment!

Check List of Things to Do

___ Register with the Career Placement Office on your campus.

___ Check to see when college recruiters will be coming to your campus.

___ Check your local newspaper for possible job leads.

___ Look through the yellow pages for job leads.

___ Register with your local state employment agency.

___ Join professional organizations.

___ Create a job seeking plan.

___ Update your resume.

___ Practice your interviewing skills.

___ Keep abreast with the current job market.

___ Set realistic goals for yourself.

___ Practice how you will disclose your disability to a potential employer.

___ Familiarize yourself with current legislation that will effect you.

Don't Forget

Things to Keep in Mind in the Job Search

There are several things that all students need to keep in mind when they are looking for professional employment:

Be Organized:

Getting organized and keeping organized is one of the most important aspects of your job search. Develop a plan for seeking employment. Keep accurate records of your job search (ie. when and what you sent to each potential employer; whether or not you contacted the employer by phone, in person, or by mail; general information that you may want for a later time). Set specific goals for yourself each day and stick with them.

Keep Motivated:

Keep in mind that finding a job that will satisfy your needs is not going to be easy. **Don't give up!** You can keep yourself motivated by keeping your resume updated, seeking ways to improve your interviewing skills (ie. video feedback, practice interviewing with your friend, speak to groups), networking, and discussing job possibilities with someone who can provide you with insight.

Critique Yourself at Regular Intervals:

You can always improve your ability to interview. Look at the areas that you feel are your weakest and work on them. Keep your resume updated. Work on your telephone techniques, and practice how you would respond to questions related to your disability and/or necessary accommodations.

Look at the Changing Job Market:

Keep abreast of new ideas/developments in your field. You can do this by reading professional journals, newspapers, and related articles. Be aware of the labor market statistics within your state. Keep in touch with your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the Vocational Rehabilitation Job Club.

Set Realistic Objectives:

Focus on getting one job lead at a time, or getting one interview at a time. Remind yourself of the accomplishments that you have achieved. Think positive!

Stress and Anxiety in the Job Search

The job search can be a stressful time and this is especially true in today's competitive labor market. Job seekers may use their self-talk to reduce the anxiety of the job search.

Self-talk that states preferences rather than absolutes can reduce anxiety and stress.

Examples:

Absolute statement:

- "I must get this job. If I am not hired, I know I will never find a job."

Preference statement:

- "I would prefer to get this job but if I am not hired then I will continue my job search. I will also use what I learned from this interview to improve my job search skills the next time."

Self-talk that reframes negative statements into positive statements can reduce anxiety and stress.

Examples:

Negative statement

- "This company does not want to hire a person with my disability. I don't know why I even signed up for this interview."

Reframed as positive statement

- "This company wants to hire persons who are qualified and can do the job. I believe that I am well qualified and can do this job. I am prepared to tell the employer how I can do the job."

40

Proper Use of Assertiveness in the Job Search

The proper use of assertiveness is important to job seekers with disabilities. Assertiveness in the job search means being positive about one's abilities and skills to get a job and to perform the basic functions of the job.

Assertive job seekers can:

- state their needs in a calm, deliberate, and agreeable manner
- use "I" statements such as "I think, I feel, I believe"
- use nonverbal communication effectively
  (eye contact, relaxed body language, firm handshake)
- be self-assured in the interview process
- communicate with an interviewer in an open, honest, and appropriate manner
- openly express their wants and needs
- disclose their disability in a comfortable manner
- express disagreement in an appropriate manner
- demonstrate that they have respect for themselves and know their abilities

Job Leads

Where to Look for Job Leads

It is important to know where to find job leads. Students with disabilities can use several avenues to find these leads. In order to increase your chance of finding professional employment that is right for you, consider using several job lead sources. Remember the more job leads that you have the better your chances of finding the right job. The following are sources of job leads:

Career Placement Center/Placement Office

Your college placement office is an excellent place to start your job search. Many employers contact career placement offices when they have job openings and are interested in recruiting students. In addition, the placement office has a comprehensive resource library describing employment opportunities available to students with disabilities.

College Recruitment Programs

Companies and agencies send recruiters to college campuses every year for the purpose of recruiting students for professional employment. Participating in such programs enable students to gain information about job opportunities that exist within a company. These programs also give student the opportunity to interview with a recruiter on campus. Your career placement office can offer more information about college recruitment programs that are available.

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)

The National Resume Database for Students with Disabilities is designed to enable students to find meaningful employment and assist companies in recruiting qualified candidates. This project is supported by the Job Accommodation Network of America and corporate donations. The database is available to students with disabilities at no charge to be listed. Students who are seeking full-time, part-time, summer, or co-op employment may fill out a standard form and return to AHEAD for listing. For more information and a database form, students should send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to AHEAD, P.O. Box 21192, Columbus, OH 43221-0192.

Newspapers

Check the "Help Wanted" section of the newspaper daily for possible job leads. The "Help Wanted" section will introduce you to your local job market.

Yellow Pages

The yellow page section of the telephone book can be used to locate job leads. In the yellow pages you can find the name, address, telephone number of employers. This section of the phone book will provide you with all the information that is needed to make an initial contact.

State Employment Offices

Your state employment office is a great source for job leads. This office has information about job leads that are not advertised in local newspapers or found by looking in the yellow pages. Register at your local state employment agency.

Private Employment Offices

These agencies are active in locating employment opportunities for students, but many of them require you to pay an initial fee and/or sign a contract indicating that you will pay them if they are successful in finding you employment. Use caution when seeking employment through a private employment service.

Advertising Yourself

Many students who are seeking employment will run ads in the classified section of their local newspaper, newsletters, and professional journals. You may want to consider advertising yourself.

Professional Associations

Professional associations have publications which include a section on job listings/ advertisements. These publications are also a place where members can advertise their qualifications.

Friends/Acquaintances/ Relatives

Pool the knowledge of your friends, acquaintances, and relatives. They are often great sources of information. Obtain as much information as you can from them about prospective employers.

Job Retention

Job Retention: What You Can Do to Keep Your Job

In the first year of employment on a new job, it is helpful to think ahead about some of the adjustments that naturally occur in a new working environment. You will need to be prepared to adjust to the interaction of fellow workers and supervisors and become skilled in cooperating with the work group.

It is important to learn the established policies and procedures of the work setting. Think of yourself as a team member and be willing to follow the company guidelines. You will need to prioritize your job responsibilities and learn how to pace yourself throughout the day so that you can deal with increased work demands.

Try to establish the following habits for successfully maintaining your employment:

- Be sure you have asked for and received in advance the job accommodations that you need.
- Be punctual or early to work every day.
- Be regular in you work attendance.
- Dress appropriately for your work and maintain good grooming habits.
- Express a positive attitude toward your tasks and other workers.
- Be loyal and enthusiastic about your company.
- Take pride in the quality of the work you do.
- Communicate any complaints only through appropriate channels and in a positive way.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Demonstrate through your positive attitude and behavior that persons with vocational disabilities are excellent employees.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Contacting Vocational Rehabilitation

College students with disabilities who are clients of vocational rehabilitation (VR) have an Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP). This IWRP should contain plans for transition from school to work. Clients of VR may receive assistance from their VR counselors in transition from college and placement in employment. College graduates with disabilities who need assistance in locating a job should take the initiative in contacting their VR counselors and requesting services.

What You Need to Know about

Cost Benefits to the Employer Who Hires a Person with a Disability

The IRS has three business tax incentives to encourage employers to hire applicants with disabilities.

- A tax deduction for making facilities and vehicles accessible.
- A tax credit to small businesses for providing job accommodation.
- A tax credit for employers who hire applicants with disabilities.

The IRS publishes a pamphlet that explains these incentives and it can be ordered from the IRS. Ask for: Tax Information for Persons with Handicaps or Disabilities

Call for a copy of this pamphlet before your interview. Be familiar with the three incentives so that you can discuss them with the employer. Take a copy of the pamphlet to the interview to show the employer.

The Effects of Employment on Benefits

One of the most difficult aspects of entering employment is dealing with Social Security benefits. Accurate answers to questions about employment and insurance are complicated by changing policies and confusing information. However, it is important for job seekers to know the effects of employment on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) programs.

A good beginning resource is, "Benefits For Disabled People Who Return To Work" published by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Social Security Administration. This pamphlet is free and can be obtained by calling or visiting any Social Security office or phone toll-free 1-800-234-5772.

This pamphlet provides the guidelines for:

- determining the continuation of benefits and Medicare when a person enters work for pay.
- determining tax deductions from earnings for certain impairment-related expenses.
- determining eligibility for a "trial work period" (TWP).
- determining eligibility for "extended work period" (EPE)
- determining what is "substantial gainful activity" (SGA).

The interaction between employment and benefits is essential for the job seeker to understand and may vary with individuals and with new legislation. Job seekers with disabilities should assume responsibility for contacting the Social Security Administration and keeping informed.

Facts About Employees with Disabilities

Know the Facts about Employees with Disabilities

Myth	Fact
It cost more to employ a person with a disability.	Managers report that it cost about the same to employ persons with disabilities as it does to employ nondisabled persons.
Workers with disabilities require job accommodations that are expensive.	Half of the job accommodations cost nothing. Three-fourths of the job accommodations that do cost are less than $500.
Employees with disabilities are a greater safety risk on the job.	Employers agree that employees with disabilities have fewer accidents on the job than nondisabled employees.
Employees with disabilities are absent from work more often than nondisabled employees.	Surveys report that employees with disabilities have equal or less sick days from work and are equally punctual.

Resources

Resources

The following list of organizations can be helpful to job seekers with disabilities. These organizations can provide information about job accommodations, the latest developments in technology, legal expertise, technical assistance, support groups, resume referral services, and job opportunities. Contacting these organizations may save the job applicant time and money.

ABLEDATA
National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research
Department of Education
Newington Children's Hospital
181 East Cedar St.
Newington, CT 06111
Voice/TT: 203-667-5405

Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board
1111 18th St. NW #501
Washington, D.C. 20036
Voice/TT: 800-872-2253
Fax: 202-272-5447

Clearinghouse on Computer Accommodation
General Services Administration
18th and F Streets NW
KGDO #2022
Washington, D.C. 20405
Voice: 202-501-4906
Fax: 202-501-3855

Clearinghouse on Disability Information
Department of Education, OSERS
Switzer Building #3132
Washington, D.C. 20202
Voice: 202-732-1241
Fax: 202-732-1252

Department of Justice
Office on the Americans with Disabilities Act
P.O. Box 66118
Washington, D.C. 20035
ADA Hotline
Voice: 202-514-0301
TT: 202-514-0383
Fax: 202-307-0595

Department of Transportation
400 7th St. SW #10424
Washington, D.C. 20590
Voice: 202-366-9305
TT: 202-755-7687
Fax: 202-366-7153

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
1801 L St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20507
Voice: 800-669-3362

Federal Communications Commission
1919 M St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20554
Voice: 202-632-7260
TT: 202-632-6999
Fax: 202-632-0942

Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
Office of Information and Referral for People with Disabilities
Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
P.O. Box 22806
Jackson, MS 39225
Voice/TT: 601-936-7790
Fax: 601-936-8097

HEATH Resource Center
(Higher Education and the Handicapped)
Project of American Council on Education
Department of Education
1 Dupont Circle NW #800
Voice/TT: 800-544-3284
Fax: 202-833-4760

Internal Revenue Service
Department of the Treasury
P.O. Box 7604
Ben Franklin Station
Washington, D.C. 20044
Voice: 202-566-3292
Fax: 202-535-6766

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
(President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities)
West Virginia University
P.O. Box 6122
Morgantown, WV 26506
Voice/TT: 800-526-7234 (outside West Virginia)
Voice/TT: 800-526-4689 (inside West Virginia)
Fax: 304-293-6661

Medicare/Medicaid Programs
Health Care Financing Administration
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20201
Voice: 202-245-6113

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
1331 F St. NW #300
Washington, D.C. 20004
Voice: 202-376-6200
TT: 202-376-6205
Fax: 202-376-6219

55